

CHAPTER 1000 INTRODUCTION

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1100 CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

- A. **Policy** drives **what** the agency and its staff must do and is grounded in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and federal laws, regulations, and policy interpretations; for example, federal Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) policy interpretations. Where state law is in conflict with federal law or regulation, the federal rule prevails.
- B. **Procedure** defines **how** the agency and its staff implement policy.
- C. **Practice guidelines** identify how the agency and its staff will behave as they implement policy and procedure.
- D. The *Case Services Policy Manual* sets forth the policies with regard to client families and individuals as they progress through six essential functions from Intake to Resolution: **what** Children's Administration (CA) and the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) must do to comply with laws and regulations. The accompanying *Practices and Procedures Guide* sets forth good practice on **how** the agency and staff will implement policy.
 - 1. The six essential functions for which DCFS is responsible are:
 - a. Intake b. Assessment c. Planning
 - d. Service Delivery e. Review f. Resolution
- E. These six functions can be arranged linearly and, while clients do not move in a straight line through agency services, each client's case progresses through the six functions. This manual sets forth policy according to functions in the child welfare process.
- F. In addition, this manual sets forth the policies with regard to providers and ancillary services that may be necessary to assist clients as they progress.

1200 CA MISSION AND VALUES

- A. **Protecting Children:** Our foremost goal is to protect children from abuse and neglect.
 - 1. We believe children need to grow up in a safe and healthy environment free from abuse and neglect.
 - 2. We believe protecting children is primarily the responsibility of families, relatives, and communities.

3. We believe that children should be raised by their own families whenever possible.
 4. We believe it is necessary to intervene to protect children when families are unable to do so.
 5. We believe it is in the best interest of children to implement permanent plans swiftly once it becomes clear that reasonable and concerted efforts toward improving family functioning have failed.
- B. **Supporting Families:** We believe it is our responsibility to treat families at all times with fairness and respect.
1. We believe that in most instances the family is the best place for a child to grow. This includes the child's extended family or an adoptive family.
 2. We believe every family has strengths. We are committed to assisting families to build upon their strengths and ameliorate their shortcomings.
 3. We strive to help families discover their options, make constructive choices, and understand the consequences of their actions.
 4. We strive to be as responsive as we can to the unique needs of each and every family and to exercise our authority with sensitivity and compassion.
 5. We believe it is our responsibility to make reasonable and concerted efforts to help the families we serve to succeed.
- C. **Working with Communities:** We believe it is our responsibility to engage with our communities at all levels to develop and deliver the best possible services for our clients.
1. We believe it is important to utilize community resources and expertise in a collaborative effort to improve services and enhance agency coordination.
 2. We strive to be open and responsive to community concerns and to work quickly to resolve differences and improve service delivery whenever possible.
 3. We believe it is important to educate community professionals and the public as to our policies, procedures, resources, and limitations.
 4. We encourage staff involvement in community projects, groups, boards, and committees that focus on the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

5. We value the cultural diversity of our clients, staff, and community and are committed to furthering communication and understanding among all people.
- D. **Encouraging Excellence:** We encourage and support a total commitment to excellence in all aspects and at all levels of CA employment.
1. We strive constantly to improve our professional understanding and skills through training, workshops, community consultations, and ongoing evaluation of our policies, procedures, and practices.
 2. We encourage creative problem-solving and professional risk-taking.
 3. We are committed to developing cultural sensitivity and competence and to seeking out staff with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and cultures.
 4. We strive to support the professional growth and development of staff and to provide opportunities for advancement.
 5. We believe in open communication, teamwork, and a shared decision-making process with an emphasis on accountability.

1300 SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Staff are expected to utilize the Shared Decision-Making Matrix in Appendix C of this manual as the model for sharing information and decisions with supervisors, regional managers, and headquarters managers. Shared decision-making means systematically employing teams for key decisions, as described in the matrix.

1400 DECLARATIONS OF PURPOSE

The following Declarations of Purpose are expressions of legislative intent or purpose and are intended as goals to be pursued by CA.

1410 Children And Family Services RCW 74.14A

- A. The family unit is the fundamental resource of American life that should be nurtured.
1. The family unit should remain intact in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary.
 2. The Legislature declares that the goal of serving emotionally disturbed and mentally ill children, potentially dependent children, and families-in-conflict is to provide services to them in their own homes and to avoid out-of-home placement of the child, when that form of care is premature, unnecessary, or inappropriate.

1420 Family Preservation Services - RCW 74.14C

It is the intent of the Legislature to make accessible, within available funds, intensive services to children and families that are designed to prevent the unnecessary imminent placement of children in foster care, and are designed to facilitate reunification of children with their families. These services are known as family preservation services and are characterized by the following values, beliefs, and goals:

- A. Safety of the child is always the first concern;
- B. Children need their families and should be raised by their own families whenever possible;
- C. Interventions should focus on family strengths and be responsive to individual family needs; and
- D. Improvement of family functioning is essential in order to promote the child's health, safety and welfare, thereby allowing the family to remain intact and children to remain at home.

1430 Protection Of Children RCW 26.44

- A. The bond between a child and his or her parent, custodian, or guardian is of paramount importance, and any intervention in the life of a child is also an intervention in the life of the parent, custodian, or guardian; however, instances of non-accidental injury, neglect, death, sexual abuse, and cruelty to children by their parents, custodians, or guardians have occurred, and in the instance where a child is deprived of his or her right to conditions of minimal nurture, health, and safety, the state is justified in emergency intervention based upon verified information; and therefore, the Washington State Legislature hereby provides for the reporting of such cases to the appropriate public authorities.
- B. It is the intent of the Legislature that, as a result of such reports, protective services shall be made available in an effort to prevent further abuses, and to safeguard the general welfare of such children: Provided, that such reports shall be maintained and disseminated with strictest regard for the privacy of the subjects of such reports and so as to safeguard against arbitrary, malicious or erroneous information or actions: Provided further, that this chapter shall not be construed to authorize interference with child-raising practices, including reasonable parental discipline, which are not proved to be injurious to the child's health, welfare and safety.
- C. The goal or purpose of Child Protective Services (CPS) shall be to protect children from child abuse and/or neglect (CA/N) while preserving the families' integrity to the maximum extent possible consistent with the safety and permanency needs of the child.

- D. CPS shall be made available to safeguard the general welfare of children by providing services to ameliorate conditions, which endanger the welfare of children, and to coordinate necessary programs and services relevant to the prevention, intervention, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.
- E. CPS is a priority program that is available in all geographic areas of the state of Washington.

1440 Families In Conflict RCW 13.32

- A. The family unit is the fundamental resource of American life, which should be nurtured and should remain intact in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary. Within any group of people there exists a need for guidelines for acceptable behavior. Experience and maturity of parents make them better qualified to establish guidelines beneficial to and protective of their children. It is the right and responsibility of adults to establish laws for the benefit and protection of society; and in the same manner, the right and responsibility for establishing reasonable guidelines for the family unit belongs to the adults within that unit. Further, absent abuse or neglect, parents should have the right to exercise control over their children.
- B. Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) are offered on a voluntary basis to families in conflict or with runaway children. The services are designed to develop skills and supports within families to resolve problems related to at-risk youth or family conflicts and may include, but are not limited to, referral to services for suicide prevention, psychiatric or other medical care, or psychological, welfare, legal, educational, or other social services, as appropriate to the needs of the child and family. Such services shall be provided to alleviate personal or family situations, which present a serious and imminent threat to the health or stability of the child or family and to maintain families intact wherever possible.
- C. Legislative Intent
 - 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to:
 - a. Preserve, strengthen, and reconcile families experiencing problems with at-risk youth;
 - b. Provide a legal process by which parents who are experiencing problems with at-risk youth can request and receive assistance from juvenile courts in providing appropriate care, treatment, and supervision to such youth; and
 - c. Assess the effectiveness of the Family Reconciliation Services program.

2. The Legislature does not intend by this enactment to grant any parent the right to file an at-risk youth petition or receive juvenile court assistance in dealing with an at-risk youth. The purpose of this enactment is to create a process by which a parent of an at-risk youth may request and receive assistance subject to the availability of juvenile court services and resources. Recognizing that these services and resources are limited, the Legislature intends that counties have the authority to impose reasonable limits on the utilization of juvenile court services and resources in matters related to at-risk youth. Any responsibilities imposed upon the department under this act shall be contingent upon the availability of funds specifically appropriated by the Legislature for such purpose.

[RCW 13.32A.015](#)

1445 Notification Of Child's Whereabouts

- A. Reporting by the department. See sections 2580, 3400, or 4550 of the Practices and Procedures Guide for the reporting process.
 1. Children Receiving Services From Department Of Social And Health Services/Children's Administration:
 - a. The Children's Administration will link parents to missing children by reporting missing children information to the missing children clearinghouse for those who are receiving departmental services in each of its administrative regions.
 - b. Per RCW 13.60.040, the department shall notify the clearinghouse and the child's legal custodian, advising the custodian of the child's whereabouts or that the child is subject to a dependency action when the department has obtained information that a minor child has been located at a facility funded by the department.
 2. The department shall inform the clearinghouse when reunification occurs.

[1999 c 267 § 18.] RCW 13.60.040

1450 Child Welfare Services RCW 74.13

- A. The purpose of child welfare services is to safeguard, protect and contribute to the welfare of the children of the state, through a comprehensive and coordinated program of public child welfare services providing for social services for children who require:
 1. guidance, care, control, protection, treatment or rehabilitation;
 2. setting of standards for social services and facilities for children; cooperation with public and voluntary agencies, organizations, and citizen groups in the

development and coordination of programs and activities on behalf of children;
and

3. promotion of community conditions and the resources that help parents to discharge their responsibilities for the care, development and well-being of their children.

1460 Juvenile Dependency / Rights Of Children And Families RCW 13.34

The family is a fundamental resource of American life that should be nurtured. Toward the continuance of this principle, the family unit should remain intact unless a child's right to conditions of basic nurture, health or safety is jeopardized. When the rights of basic nurture, physical and mental health, and safety of the child and the legal rights of the parents are in conflict, the rights and safety of the child should prevail. The right of a child to basic nurturing includes the right to a safe, stable, and permanent home and a speedy resolution of any court proceeding.

1470 Adoption RCW 26.33

- A. The purpose of adoption is to provide stable homes for children. Adoptions should be handled efficiently, but the rights of all parties must be protected. The guiding principle must be determining what is in the best interest of the child. It is the intent of the Legislature that the adoption chapter should be used only as a means for placing children in adoptive homes and not as a means for parents to avoid responsibility for their children unless the department, an agency, or a prospective adoptive parent is willing to assume the responsibility for the child.
- B. The department's adoption program is intended to meet the needs of children who are in the department's care and custody. The purpose is to provide opportunities for children to achieve permanent, nurturing families, when the child has no legal parent and to provide stable homes for children.

1480 Caretakers: Licensed Foster Family Homes And Relatives RCW 74.15

The purposes of licensing include the following:

- A. To safeguard the health, safety, and well-being of children and developmentally disabled persons receiving care away from their own homes, which is paramount over the right of any person to provide care.
- B. To strengthen and encourage family unity and to sustain parental rights and responsibilities to the end that foster care is provided only when a child's family, through the use of all available resources, is unable to provide necessary care.

- C. To promote the development of a sufficient number and variety of adequate child-care facilities, both public and private, through the cooperative efforts of public and voluntary agencies and related groups.
- D. To provide consultation to agencies caring for children or developmentally disabled persons in order to help them to improve their methods of care and facilities for care.
- E. To license agencies as defined in RCW 74.15.020 and to assure the users of such agencies, their parents, the community at large and the agencies themselves that adequate minimum standards are maintained by all agencies caring for children and developmentally disabled persons.

[RCW 74.15.010](#)

- F. To investigate any person, including relatives by blood or marriage except for parents, for character, suitability, and competence in the care and treatment of children and developmentally disabled persons prior to authorizing that person to care for children and developmentally disabled persons.

However, if a child is placed with a relative under RCW 13.34.060 or 13.34.130, and if such relative appears otherwise suitable and competent to provide care and treatment, the criminal history background check required by this section need not be completed before placement, but shall be completed as soon as possible after placement.

[RCW 74.15.030](#)

1490 Adoption Support RCW 74.13

The purpose of Adoption support is:

- A. To encourage, within the limits of available funds, the adoption of certain hard-to-place children in order to make it possible for children living in, or likely to be placed in, foster homes or institutions to benefit from the stability and security of permanent homes in which such children can receive continuous parental care, guidance, protection, and love, and to reduce the number of such children who must be placed or remain in foster homes or institutions until they become adults.
- B. To try, by means of the program of Adoption Support authorized in RCW 26.33.320 and 74.13.100 through 74.13.145, to reduce the total cost to the state of foster home and institutional care.

[RCW 74.13.100](#)

1500 INDIAN CHILD WELFARE

- A. All actions involving children and families of North American Indian descent shall follow policies and procedures outlined in the *CA Indian Child Welfare (ICW)*

Manual. Included in the *ICW Manual* are the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, The Tribal - Washington State Indian Child Welfare Agreement of 1987, and the Tribal - State Accord. Social workers are expected to adhere to them in the course of providing ICW services.

25 United State Code (USC) 1901 et. seq.; [RCW 13.04.030](#); RCW 13.34; [RCW13.70.150](#); [RCW 26.33.090](#) et. seq.; [RCW 74.13.031](#) and [74.13.080](#); [RCW 74.15.020](#); and [74.15.090](#)

- B. Every petition filed in proceedings shall contain a statement alleging whether the child is or may be an Indian child as defined in 25 U.S.C. Sec. 1903. If the child is an Indian child as defined under the Indian child welfare act, the provisions of the act shall apply.
- C. Whenever the court or the petitioning party in a proceeding knows or has reason to know that an Indian child is involved, the petitioning party shall promptly provide notice to the child's parent or Indian custodian and to the agent designated by the child's Indian tribe to receive such notices. Notice shall be by certified mail with return receipt requested. If the identity or location of the parent or Indian custodian and the tribe cannot be determined, notice shall be given to the secretary of the interior in the manner described in 25 C.F.R. 23.11. If the child may be a member of more than one tribe, the petitioning party shall send notice to all tribes the petitioner has reason to know may be affiliated with the child. The notice shall:
 - 1. Contain a statement notifying the parent or custodian and the tribe of the pending proceeding; and
 - 2. Notify the tribe of the tribe's right to intervene and/or request that the case be transferred to tribal court.

RCW 26.10.034, 26.33.040,

1600 CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The department shall respect and support the ethnic identity and cultural diversity of the children and families it serves, shall provide culturally competent services, and shall prevent discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, religion, marital status, age, or presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability in every aspect of service delivery.

[RCW 49.60.030](#) 42 USC 2000d, Section 601: Civil Rights Act of 1964, Titles VI and VII

1610 Culturally Appropriate Services

Services will be provided in the primary language of the family, will be culturally appropriate, will be based on the best interests of the child, and will be family focused.

42 USC 2000d, Section 601; [RCW 74.14A.020](#); [RCW 74.14A.025](#)

1700 COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

- A. Children's Administration (CA) must develop and implement an informal, non-adversarial complaint resolution process.
 - 1. The process is to be used by CA clients, foster parents, and other affected individuals who have complaints regarding a CA policy or procedure, or the application of such a policy or procedure, related to programs administered under chapter 74.13 RCW.
 - 2. The process does not apply in circumstances where the complainant has the right under Title 13, 26, or 74 RCW to seek resolution of the complaint through judicial review or through an adjudicative proceeding.

[RCW 74.13.045](#)

1800 ACCREDITATION

- A. Accreditation is a structured process designed to facilitate organizational change and improvement within individual local offices.
 - 1. Standards require improved case management, documentation, internal case management practices, and accountability.
 - 2. Accreditation requires the establishment of clear communication with biological parents, foster and adoptive parents, providers, the courts, and members of the community.

1810 Legislative Finding

- A. The Legislature finds that the accreditation of children's services by an independent entity can significantly improve the quality of services provided to children and families.
- B. Accreditation involves an ongoing commitment to meeting nationally recognized standards of practice in child welfare and holds organizations accountable for achieving improved outcomes for children.

1820 Goal

- A. The department shall undertake the process of accreditation with the goal of completion by July 2006.
- B. The department, in conjunction with a national independent accreditation entity, shall report to the appropriate legislative committees its progress towards complete accreditation on an annual basis, starting December 2001.

[RCW 74.13.0100](#)